



Wisconsin is one of the 10 states selected to participate in New Skills for Youth (NSFY), an initiative enhancing state efforts to increase the number of kids across the country who are prepared for success in both college and career. NSFY is a \$75 million, five-year initiative developed by JPMorgan Chase in collaboration with the Council of Chief State School Officers, Advance CTE and Education Strategy Group.

In Phase One of the initiative, the Wisconsin NSFY team investigated equity gaps and launched a strategy to define and scale high-quality career pathways throughout the state.<sup>1</sup> Phase Two of the NSFY initiative began in January 2017. This snapshot profiles Wisconsin's progress in the first year of Phase Two, including:

- **Implementing Pathways Wisconsin:** A cross-sector team developed criteria for assessing high-quality career pathways and put plans in place to develop and scale high-quality career pathways through a regional approach.
- **Scaling academic and career planning statewide:** Following years of planning and piloting, Wisconsin's Academic and Career Plan was scaled statewide.
- **Engaging employers:** Wisconsin secured local industry buy-in through the business-education platform InSPIRE and the revision of the Business Friends of Education (BFoE) recognition program.

## *Foundations for Career Pathways in Wisconsin*

Prior to joining the NSFY initiative, career pathways development in Wisconsin was diversified and, at times, disconnected. The Wisconsin NSFY team noted countless "islands of excellence," where cities and school districts had made considerable progress connecting K-12 educational pathways with employment and postsecondary opportunities, broadening opportunity for students in those areas. These islands of excellence include efforts in Milwaukee and Madison to develop and enroll students in high-quality, employer-validated career pathways. Further, the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS), which comprises 16 regions and 49 campuses, is known for its robust postsecondary options, which were developed and enhanced through partnerships with the Joyce Foundation Shifting Gears initiative and the U.S. Department of Labor Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training grant program.<sup>2</sup>

Wisconsin has also undergone a significant, statewide restructure of its educational planning and guidance system through a new initiative called Academic and Career Planning (ACP). ACP was passed

by the state Legislature in 2013 and directs local school boards to provide ACP services for pupils in grades 6-12 by the 2017-18 school year. In 2016, ACP requirements were formalized through regulations laying out how ACP programs should be implemented.<sup>3</sup>

Building upon this work, the Wisconsin NSFY team aimed to develop and scale a regional approach to designing and validating secondary career pathways, integrating ACP opportunities and meaningful relationships with employers, to ensure that opportunities are held to high standards of rigor but still allow for regional flexibility.

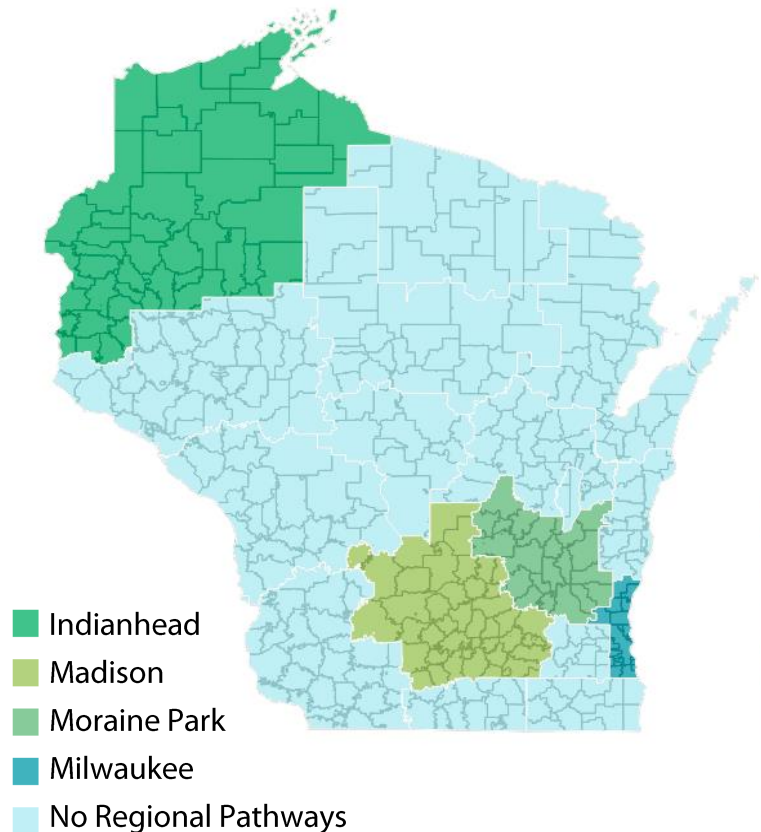
## ***Executing the Pathways Wisconsin Model***

In Phase One, Wisconsin identified the need to define and scale high-quality career pathways that equip students with skills relevant to the state's workforce. The Wisconsin NSFY project team developed a framework called the Regional Career Pathways Project to establish a shared definition of high-quality career pathways and put in place systems to review and approve quality programs regionally.<sup>4</sup>

This approach is being piloted in four regions — Indianhead, Madison, Milwaukee and Moraine Park — to build a proof of concept and make the case for additional funding from the Legislature to scale the program to 12 other regions. In 2017, the Wisconsin NSFY team, operating under the name Pathways Wisconsin, hired regional directors for all four pilot regions. Regional directors are tasked with convening regional councils, identifying and working with CEO champions to engage local employers, and leading processes to designate priority career pathways in those regions.

Under the Pathways Wisconsin model, the work of identifying priority industries and designating high-quality career pathways is conducted by regional career pathways councils, which are each led by a CEO champion. CEO champions ensure that career pathways are aligned with industry needs and galvanize support from other area employers. In 2017, the statewide Pathways Wisconsin team developed a framework to guide regional career pathways designation, which includes quality criteria for career pathways that could be used to evaluate and approve programs in each region.

These criteria were developed through a partnership between the state Pathways Wisconsin team, the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), the Department of Workforce Development and the WTCS. The



*Figure 1: Pathways Wisconsin regional career pathways model*

### High-quality secondary career pathways in Wisconsin ...

Are employer-led and collaborative.	Are labor market driven.
Articulate to a variety of postsecondary options.	Require a pathway-related work-based learning experience.
Result in a valued credential for access to entry level work.	Require at least one pathway-related dual enrollment, college level and/or capstone-like course.
Are included in the school's counseling materials as part of ACP service delivery.	Are available and accessible by all students.

Figure 2: Pathways Wisconsin's quality criteria for career pathways

criteria, which draw on past work in the state, can be applied to career pathways developed in each of the four pilot regions and eventually scaled to all 16 regions statewide. Among other things, the criteria stipulate that career pathways should be accessible to all students, employer led, labor market driven, and able to result in a valued credential.

This special attention to regional context makes Wisconsin's approach to career pathways unique. Each region will be able to make the most of changes and developments in its economy to ensure that the workforce is prepared to meet anticipated needs.

Instead of creating an entirely new regional career pathway infrastructure, Pathways Wisconsin works with existing local systems to establish customized approaches to workforce development. In the Milwaukee region, for example, this work includes coordinating with two existing initiatives called M7 and M3. M7 is a regional, cooperative economic development platform for seven cities focused on attracting new businesses to the region, forming new partnerships among local businesses, and ensuring that the skills of the local workforce are able to meet the needs of local industry.<sup>5</sup> Separately, M3

(also known as M-cubed) is a partnership among three major urban public education institutions — Milwaukee Public Schools, Milwaukee Area Technical College and the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee.<sup>6</sup> M3 aims to increase the retention, graduation rates and career success of the city's students with a comprehensive K-16 approach that promotes technical education and postsecondary learning. With both initiatives actively working to foster partnerships and expand career pathways in the area, the Pathways Wisconsin regional director in Milwaukee is working to integrate these efforts into Pathways Wisconsin.

In 2017, CEO champions were appointed in all four pilot regions and regional career pathways council meetings were organized to identify priority industries in each Pathways Wisconsin region. These analyses were scheduled to be released in spring 2018 and will be used to inventory and evaluate the career pathways offered in each region.

## Leveraging Academic and Career Planning

The Pathways Wisconsin team is also working to integrate career advisement and supports into the regional career pathways model through the statewide implementation of ACP. Under the revised 2016 Wisconsin ACP standards, students begin building career awareness in 6th grade to gain an understanding of the jobs available in the state.<sup>7</sup> In middle school, students complete self-assessments to identify their interests and career goals, and ACP advisers help them build personalized plans for career readiness. These plans include options such as CTE and work-based learning.

While 2017-18 is the first full year of ACP implementation, the approach was piloted in select districts, as required by state statute, before being scaled statewide. Evaluations of the ACP pilot found strong buy-in and support from school administrators and staff.<sup>8</sup> Lessons from the pilot evaluation have informed Wisconsin’s approach to scaling ACP statewide, including the need for communication support and ensuring that enough time is allotted for proper implementation.

The Wisconsin Association for School Counselors has been working to build school-level capacity to support career pathways implementation. The association designed and facilitated a workshop in 2017 to train school counselors on Pathways Wisconsin and equip them with the knowledge and tools to integrate career pathways into their students’ ACP plans.

While Wisconsin did not include any measures of career readiness in its federal accountability system under the Every Student Succeeds Act, state policymakers in 2017 did take steps to reinforce ACP planning and career readiness opportunities at the high school level by defining new indicators for school and district report cards in the state accountability system. In 2017, the Legislature passed a requirement for the school and district accountability report cards to include the number of students participating in youth apprenticeship programs, enrolling in and passing Advanced Placement courses and earning industry-recognized credentials.<sup>9</sup> Schools and districts will start to report these data to DPI in the 2018-19 school year, and a school and district accountability advisory group will help develop a roadmap for including these and other college and career readiness data in the state accountability report cards.

With ACP, Wisconsin hopes to encourage a shift in school districts’ approach to career development away from the “random acts of career development” that have traditionally been present in the K-12 system. By integrating such opportunities throughout students’ academic careers, the state aims to make high school graduation a check-point along the way to a meaningful career rather than an end-goal.

## Recognizing Employer Engagement

The participation and buy-in of local employers is crucial to the success of ACP and Pathways Wisconsin. To that end, Wisconsin is working to incentivize businesses to participate in local career development initiatives through the BFoE program, a statewide recognition and award program for employers.<sup>10</sup> Businesses can apply or be nominated for BFoE recognition if they have partnered with local school districts to provide

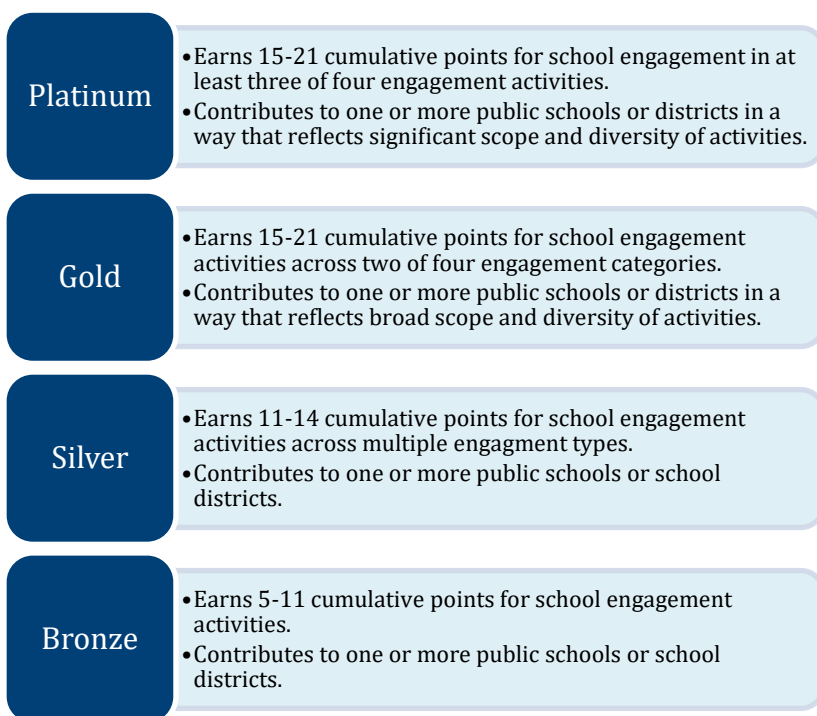


Figure 3: Business Friends of Education scoring rubric

opportunities for career development, volunteering or training, mentoring and work-based learning. They can also be recognized for providing schools with other services, materials or supplies.

In 2017, 55 applicants applied for the BFoE recognition, and 45 were formally recognized in March 2018.<sup>11</sup> To encourage continued engagement, the Wisconsin Department of Education plans to develop supports — including a public relations toolkit for engaging schools — for BFoE recipients. The Pathways Wisconsin team has set a goal to recognize 250 BFoEs by the end of 2019.

The state is also working to expand and leverage the engagement of BFoEs and other local businesses through the InSPIRE platform, an employer portal that is part of a statewide career planning software.<sup>12</sup> InSPIRE enables employers to develop profiles, helping them to connect with students and educators seeking work-based learning opportunities.

While InSPIRE has been used at the regional level, it is now being rolled out statewide with the help of funding from the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation. The use of InSPIRE is expected to dovetail with the newly implemented ACP program, presenting students with more choices to explore high-quality career pathways in their area and identify opportunities to interact with employers.

## *Looking Ahead*

With its regional approach to career preparation, Wisconsin aims to align career pathways with local employer needs and enhance career planning to ensure that students throughout the state are aware of meaningful career opportunities in their area. Employer engagement will continue to form the foundations for Pathways Wisconsin, with CEO champions playing a strong role in making regional decisions.

Wisconsin may see a change in state leadership by the end of 2018. State Superintendent of Education Tony Evers is challenging incumbent Scott Walker for governor. Given the potential for both gubernatorial and chief change, the sustainability and buy-in for career pathways at the local level is even more of a priority for the Pathways Wisconsin team. In the second year of Phase Two, the Wisconsin NSFY team will focus on gaining more support from employers and educational institutions, scaling up the use of the InSPIRE platform, expanding the BFoE program, and identifying regional workforce priorities to inform career pathways expansion.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://careertech.org/resource/wisconsin-phase-one-nsfy-snapshot>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.joycefdn.org/news/2015-shifting-gears-report-released> and <https://doleta.gov/taaccct/pdf/WI.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> [https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/admin\\_code/pi/26](https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/admin_code/pi/26)

<sup>4</sup> [https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/cte/nsfy/WI-Regional\\_Career\\_Pathways\\_Flyer.pdf](https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/cte/nsfy/WI-Regional_Career_Pathways_Flyer.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.mke7.com>

<sup>6</sup> <http://mps.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/en/District/Initiatives/M-cubed.htm>

<sup>7</sup> <https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/acp/DPI%20Guide%202016%20FINAL%20web.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/acp/ACP%20Pilot%20Full%20Report%20Final.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2017/related/acts/59.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> <https://dpi.wi.gov/business-friends>

<sup>11</sup> <https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/news-release/dpinr2018-03.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> <https://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/school-age-parent/inspire-grant>